

The COMMONWEAL

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*Light from the Ancient Past—Memoirs of
Hecate County—Grooves of Change*

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Plight of the Displaced

A DETAILED communication which appeared in these columns six weeks ago indicated a deplorable attitude on the part of certain of our occupation authorities in Germany toward displaced persons. This protest was signed by fifty individual American soldiers. It was a spontaneous manifestation of the humane sentiments which also inspire the generality of our citizenry. Yet occupation DP regulations and practice have constantly violated that sentiment.

Such is also unhappily the case in the wider handling of the whole refugee and displaced persons problem by the allied victors. It is four months now since President Truman directed that this country open her doors to the extremely tiny total of 3,900 refugees and DP's per month; none of them has yet embarked for America. There is still no means of forwarding funds from relatives or friends over here. Of course there are excuses. Returning servicemen and their families require much shipping space; there is effort to restore peacetime freight and passenger service. Screening of the immigrants is not adequately provided for. Obstacles are many.

At the same time there is talk of closing all American DP camps by August, four months off. Will the choice for the exiles then be between returning to a homeland with hostile social, political and religious conditions—where even life itself may be in jeopardy—or fending for themselves on a famine-ridden continent? That would

be the dilemma if Russia gets her way. Her program in this matter is repatriation or cessation of support, a terrible set of alternatives for Ruthenians, Ukrainians, Balts, Poles and other threatened exiles. Several hundred thousand souls cannot, or refuse to be repatriated.

Their plight is the responsibility of all the Allied Powers. It has no single solution. It is obvious that effective methods for providing the transfer of many to the United States, Britain and other habitable countries of their choice are one of the first requirements. Other exiles should be permitted to live with full civil rights in the countries in which they are now situated. All should be given a recognized status by some device which is an improvement on the old Nansen international passport. All pretence of liberation, democratic ideals, the four freedoms and the rest must be abandoned unless forced repatriation is barred absolutely. The DP's and other refugees remain a United Nations responsibility until they have been enabled to start life anew under livable conditions. One of the few hopeful aspects of their present state is the program of the World Organization of Rehabilitation through Training to instruct 100,000 of these war victims this year in useful techniques and crafts.

How to Lose an Election

SPRING is bringing political elections in many areas where elections have not been seriously tried for many years. One fact proved again by all this voting is that elections are not the foundation of a free or a democratic politics; they are more nearly the crown or the symptom of democratic health.

More thought and attention should be devoted to losing elections. Political, economic and social problems are not near solution until those who lose elections can still remain integral members of the community which provides the electoral system, and names the winners. If the opposition is not a "loyal opposition," living conditions are bound to be distressing and unhappy.

At least through April Fool's Day, there was too much and too narrow attention concentrated by governments and parties upon winning votes and beating opponents. In Greece, for example, the communists and their captured allies, seeing that they could not gain the election, thereupon campaigned for abstention from voting. The other parties went ahead and, under Allied electoral supervision, obtained their victory. Early estimates showed between 65 and 75 percent of Greek citizens cast ballots (higher than the 62 percent who went to the polls in 1936, when they last had a fair chance), and the EAM-Communist group looked sick. But so did Greece. The communists are not reconciled; the king ques-

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tion remains open; a policy for building Greece, obtaining national and personal freedom, peace and order does not automatically emerge. And it goes similarly from country to country.

In our own zones of occupation, Americans appear to be pushing elections, but we are very vague about what these elections are to mean. In Southern Germany and in Japan the political conditions are those of regulated revolution, with USA authorities doing the regulating. Such a condition brings up to the surface of practical importance a duality inherent in democracy which does not much trouble a going democratic set-up like England's or America's. Is it democracy when the persons governing in office are the free choices of the majority? Is it democracy when the régime embodies the laws, the rules and regulations, the tone and tendencies, which we attribute to democracy, even though the administrators, judges and legislators may not be the current choices of the majority of the people?

The United States is committed to assuring for our zone in Germany and for all of Japan régimes which shall be democratic in a way and to a degree satisfactory to ourselves and to our allies. We appear to answer officially the last question above, "yes."

We must recognize that with conditions as they are, this may not permit current, real majority-choice governments and laws, and to that extent there will be a contradiction in the democracy we foster. General MacArthur's answer to the Far Eastern Commission, ruling against a deferment of the 10 April Japanese election, appears to recognize this dilemma and to work for as objective and at least frank a solution as is possible. Electoral freedom is hedged in by a purge of politicians and public offices and a screening of candidates. The campaigning and voting are supervised. The government that results from the election can be dissolved by General MacArthur if it proves "disadvantageous to the occupation." What more can an occupying army do? Democracy cannot be forcefully imposed by winners of wars or elections. It must win the minds and wills of those who win and those who lose, or it cannot possibly flourish.

General Drazha Mihailovich

THE capture of General Mihailovich by the Tito Government in Yugoslavia at once raises a question of the good faith of that régime as well as of its Russian masters. Certain facts are amply clear. Mihailovich is not a communist and has been opposed to Marshal Tito. At the same time he has proved himself a valiant patriot, sufficiently irksome to the nazis to have won their offer of a magnificent reward for his capture. During his guerrilla opposition to the Germans he did not act in any vacuum, many hundreds of

Americans and British having spent varying lengths of time with him, continuously from the beginning of his opposition until the German collapse. Now it is announced that he will be tried for treason in the courts of the present Yugoslav régime. If that régime and its Russian sponsors wish to prove their good faith, the trial will be open and witnesses for Mihailovich will have their day in court. If this should not happen, and Mihailovich is condemned, we can only reach one conclusion—good faith is outside the ken both of Tito and his Russian friends.

Two Promoters of the Liturgy

WITHIN a week the Church has lost two of her most effective promoters of the liturgical movement. First Monsignor Joseph F. Stedman died in Brooklyn, and then Mother Georgia Stevens, R.S.C.J. in Manhattan. Their loss will be felt by every Catholic interested in the cause for which both spent their lives. Between these two similarly dedicated persons there is an almost classic contrast. Monsignor Stedman was possessed of an unquenchable energy which naturally led him to concentrate his efforts on the many. His constant effort was to produce wholesale results. His Sunday Missal and similar works achieved a circulation of some 15,000,000 copies, and that within approximately a decade. He designed these books with a view to making their use so simple that no one could plead difficulty as an excuse for putting them aside. In sheer weight of numbers his achievement seems almost miraculous. In contrast, Mother Stevens affected only a relatively few people. When she died at the age of 76, her name was universally known among those truly devoted to the cause of the *Motu Proprio*, yet the impact she has made, though of great intensity, was far more limited in its direct extent. Her whole nature demanded that she seek perfection in a few rather than an impression over many. The result was that everything she did was done thoroughly and well; her pupils live to continue the tradition she established. Both her method and Monsignor Stedman's, however different, have their uses and bear their fruits. One complements the other, and because, temperamentally, an individual may prefer one to the other is no excuse for his not recognizing the validity of both. Each labored with marvelous success according to his talents. R.I.P.

Famine and Peace

THERE are sounds that people everywhere expected to hear when the war was finished—the sounds that would make again the silence of peace. Each man had his own memories during the war and someone would say that the war was

over when he heard the turnstile click in the subway again, and someone would say that he had to cross the field into the woods and afterward, down in the hollow, he would stand still and it would be when he heard the brook before he could see it that he would know that the war was entirely over.

The American soldiers who have come home have found these sounds once more, because, even if they are worrying about work or a house, there is a full assortment of peacetime sounds to which they can listen.

The American soldiers remaining abroad hear other sounds; the peculiar complaining sound that a child makes when it wants to eat is one of them. There are also the angry or despairing sounds made by parents.

The American soldiers remaining abroad, anywhere abroad, look through barred fences into a zoo; they throw bits of K rations to the animals and a pail of garbage; they are kind to animals; they have a fondness for animals; but they keep looking for the sign "Do not feed the animals" which is always posted up in any well-regulated zoo, and they keep looking for the employee who comes at feeding hour to make the animals happy—but no employee ever comes.

The sounds made by people abroad who are hungry interrupt the purling of the brook in whatever woods anyone anywhere would be trying to listen to it or to the birds. The sounds made by the famished are not the sounds of peace.

Of course it could be argued that all we have to do is to wait until the people abroad are silent. Many already are silent; it would only be a question of time before their complaints ceased interrupting our peace. Or one could remember the solution that Swift found long ago for the Irish: eat the children and they will not cry. We could send that advice to the Poles.

But that is not our policy. It is not the policy that a great and happy nation would likely indulge in. It would not come naturally to us.

During the war we made the most fervent promises that food would follow victory; the ships that bring the men and the guns to liberate you will bring you food so that you will be enabled to stand up and sing a greeting to freedom and not lie down with freedom whispering in the trees like a cold wind over the dead. And ever since the war we have sent the best and kindest expressions of our solicitude. Not so many ships have sailed, and they have carried not so much grain, but we have built UNRRA, which is a mechanism to collect, carry and distribute food.

We supposed that UNRRA would work like a rocket, self-propelled. We aimed UNRRA at Europe and then happily went back to peace and to that brook in the woods (which by this time must have a trout in it).

We have been busy making sounds, the sounds

well-meaning people make when they take one soft step toward achievement and two steps back. But the sounds from Europe, from China, from Japan have made us as soundless as ghosts. It is as if the ghosts of those who have starved were about us like a mist; it is as if we were walking in a mist and all the words we spoke returned to us with the sound and meaning become deceptive. So that recently we have been feeling that all we sent out to the suffering was words.

There is a man called La Guardia who was Mayor of New York and now is appointed Director General of the UNRRA. He looks like the best invention we have ever found to dispel the mists, placate the ghosts, keep a lot of people from turning into ghosts. He is making a sound like someone who knows where he is going, he is making a sound like a great ship sailing out of New York Harbor. He is making the sounds of tractors, trucks and trains.

From this point on the protocol is off. . . . It is food that we need. The people are crying for bread, not advice. I want plows, not typewriters. The people need relief, not sympathy. I want fast-moving ships, not slow-reading resolutions. People can't eat resolutions and even the people in our country have learned through a period of depression that ticker tape ain't spaghetti . . .

And politics is dumped into the bay.

Wheat has no political complexion, and I'll buy wheat any place in the world where I can find it. And I start right off now in extending my very best personal greetings to General Perón and to say to him that here is an opportunity for Argentina to show that it desires to cooperate with the democracies of the world. . . . I want you to know that hunger does not recognize a boundary line and that we approach no group of people with a ballot in one hand and food in the other. . . .

He knows why the ghosts of the starving interfere with our peace:

In my own city we waste enough food to feed a city of 350,000 people every day. That is a correct statement I know. I picked up that garbage for twelve years.

He means business.

Now, gentlemen, don't be hasty about this [accepting him as Director General of UNRRA]. Let's think it over. Unless I hear to the contrary I shall take over Monday morning, and I mean take over. I can't help repeating it so many times, and this is all so new. It is all hopeful. Have ever before in the history of the entire world forty-eight nations come together to save lives? . . . I refuse to be stopped by pettiness, the greed or selfishness of man.

It is not that any one man can relieve us of the burden of anxiety, the duty to act; La Guardia is no mast to which we bind ourselves with ears stopped with wax against the cries of suffering (they were sirens of suffering and not of pleasure who called Ulysses to despair); it is that a nation delegates its men of action in peace as it does in war.

C. G. PAULDING.

Poems

Thomas Merton

Two States of Prayer

In wild October, when the low hills lie
With open eye,
And own the land like lions,

Our prayer is like the thousands in the far, forgotten
stadiums,
Building its exultation like a tower of fire,
Until the marvelous woods spring to their feet
And raid the skies with their red-headed shout:

This is the way our hearts take flame
And burn us down, on pyres of prayer, with too much
glory.

But when the trees have all torn up their programs,
Scattering the pathos of immense migrations to the open-
handed winds,
Clouding and saddening the dusky valley,
Sorrow begins to bully the bare bars
Of those forsaken cages,
And thought lies slaughtered in the broken doors.

But by the light of our December mornings,
Though words stand frozen in the voice's well
And all the country pumps are dumb,
Look where the landscape, like a white Cistercian,
Puts on the ample winter like a cowl
And so conceals, beneath the drifts of quiet contemplation,
The ragged fences and the ravaged field.

The hills lie still, the woods their Sabbath keep.
The farms, half-buried in their winter coats,
Are warm as sheep.
When was there ever greater than this penitential peace,
Outshining all the songs of June with radiant silences?

November analyzed our bankruptcy, but now
His observations lie knee-deep beneath our Christmas
mercies:
While, folded in the buried seed,
The virtual summer lives and sleeps,
And every acre keeps its treasure like a kingly secret.

On the Anniversary of My Baptism

Certain waters are as blue as metal
Or as salt as sorrow.
Others wince like brass in the hammering sun,
Or stammer all over with tremors of shadow,
That die as fast as the light winds
Whose flights surprise the promontories

And the marble bay.

Some are clouded, everywhere, off-shore, with purple coral
Between the fleets of light that foundered in the sand,
Others are full of yawls, or loud with launches,
Or sadder than the bitter smoke
Of tug and trawler, tramp and collier,

Or as grey as battle.

Oh! Since I was a baby in the Pyrenees,
When old Saint Martin marked me for the cloister, from
high Canigou,
How many deeps, how many wicked seas,
Went to befriend me with a flash of white-caps
Louder than laughter in the wind and sun,
Or slogged all our brown bows gunwale under
In their rowdy thunder:—
Only to return me to the land.

Do you suppose that if the green Atlantic
Had ever cracked our brittle shell,
And rifled all the cabins for their fruit of drunken
passengers,
Do you suppose my sins,
Once we were sorted and disposed forever
Along the shelves of that profound, unvisited museum.
Would there have been immune,
Or learned to keep their coats of unreality
From the deep sea's most patient candying?

The day You made the waters,
And dragged them down from the dividing islands,
And let them spring with fish,

You planned to bless the brine out of the seas
That were to be my death.

And this is the seventh November since my world's end
and my Genesis,
When, with the sting of salt in my dry mouth,
Cross-crowned with water by the priest,
Stunned at the execution of my old companion, death,
And with the savage murder of my history,
You drowned me in the shallow font.

My eyes, swimming in unexpected infancy,
Were far too frail for so much favor:
They still close-kept the stone shell of their empty
sepulchre:
But, though they saw none, guessed the new-come Trinity
That filled my sinews with His gallant life.

As Plain as Black and White

Lewis M. Dickson

IT WAS cold in the little, boxy apartment when the Corporal got home from the Post on Saturday afternoon with a big paper bag of commissary groceries. His wife was wearing a pair of GI wool socks and a GI sweater, and Bobby was bundled up with a doll on her lap, solemnly rocking back and forth.

"Mel, we've got to get some coal. I'm frozen. Mrs. Johnstone and I phoned every coal yard in town and nobody will deliver by the sack at all, only in tons. If we weren't so darn broke. . . . I wish that nigger would come again."

"This afternoon," he stood back dramatically, raising a finger. "I will get coal."

"Is the guy upstairs home yet?"

"Yes, he got back just before you did and she's going to talk to him."

"Oh, a female conspiracy, eh. We can afford two bucks for coal before payday, and then we won't need much coal after that. When does it start to get warm in Georgia anyhow?"

Jammed into the front room in addition to the bed were an army cot which served as Bobby's crib, a small desk, two chairs, and the little squat stove which demanded the coal. In one corner were stacked their suitcases and some ammunition boxes which doubled as trunks for the frequent shipment of their worldly possessions.

The house was about a block from the highway and he could hear the muffled roar of traffic. Most of it is civilian now that it is peacetime, he thought. All around them for blocks, like strawberry boxes scattered in the wind, was a pattern of similar shacks. They were flimsy, insouciant, and placed with pleasant disregard for symmetry, one to a lot here, three to a lot there, some near the front, some near the back. All were perched precariously on stubby columns of brick. None had basements or upper floors. None had garages or fences. All were painted white. Chipper, defiantly brave in the face of their impermanence, they were America's breezy answer to the prayer for homes.

They had been built when the war had come along and the camp had been swollen, built hurriedly to capitalize on the army wife, temporary squatter on the periphery of all the army posts looped like a vast chain across the waist of the South. Now the civilians and ex-soldiers were invading them, planting little garden patches on the sterile clay, and parking their jalopies on the

front lawns. In peace and in war the houses served.

"If we only had a car," he mumbled to the Pfc. from upstairs as they walked stiffly down the street, "we wouldn't have any trouble, but now we've got to go hunting all over the lot."

The Pfc. from upstairs was blond and scrawnily lean and he talked in a thin, starved drawl. The two had not associated much. The Pfc. always said that he was "fixin'" to do so-and-so, and talked about "this evenin'" when he meant the afternoon, and he said "down yonder." And the Corporal had a somewhat flattened twang to his voice, and these cultural differences had left them with nothing to talk about on the one occasion when the upstairs couple had come downstairs "to visit with them."

"Reckon we'll spend all evenin' gettin' this coal," said the Pfc. "I got three month's pay comin'!" he added cryptically. On the highway they caught a bus going to town.

"We'll go to that nigger's first," said the Pfc. "That one that your wife was talking about to my wife."

The Corporal didn't answer, but he suddenly stopped thinking about his wife and baby. They passed a row of brick shops—a grocery, a hardware, a radio repair shop, a beauty shoppe—all hopefully new and clean. The bus stopped at nearly every corner. The white people came in and sat quietly in the front of the bus, the Negroes came in and sat quietly in the rear of the bus. Whites' to the front, Negroes to the rear.

"White" the signs would say here and there, and "Colored." Every time he saw it say "White" and "Colored," the Corporal was forced to look again quickly. He was still new to it. He and his wife would talk about the "Negro situation" as they called it, but he would never get into arguments with other people about it. It was something void of reason, he thought, something fearful, with an obscene background. "The whole thing" he said once to his wife "hangs like a black pall over the entire South," thus settling it as an unsolvable, unapproachable subject, a matter to be put away. But every time he saw the signs he thought of it again.

The houses on each side of the road became dark and dingy. Some of them had wooden shutters instead of glass windows. They were jammed closely together in monotonous rows built

to the edges of the narrow path flanking each side of the highway. Here, frequently, the stubby brick supports were rotted away and the houses leaned and sagged. Instead of the sheathing being nailed on horizontally as in other houses, it was nailed on vertically with narrow slats or battens over the cracks. They had never known paint. They were the poor relatives of the pretty, painted shacks where the two soldiers lived, and only the march of a few swift years separated the habitableness of the two groups. But here, the children who played along the curbs in swarms were black, and brown, and high yellow, and all of them were skinny. The Corporal watched them. Kids are all the same, he thought, when they are playing.

"Hey, there's an old guy with a coal cart! Let's get out here," exclaimed the Pfc. The Corporal hesitated a moment. "Here?" he said. Then he got up quickly and followed the Pfc. to the door. When they got off the coal cart was gone. People were looking at them, thought the Corporal, as he stared around at the shabby street. He felt like an intruder—as though he were slumming, and he wondered what he would do if there were any trouble. But nobody was thinking about trouble. If there were any trouble Pfc. Johnstone would know what to do; he was from Louisiana. The Corporal's home was a small town up north and there were only three Negroes in the whole town, so there was never any trouble of that kind. Nobody thought about it at all up there, but he had been in Detroit when the riot had broken out and he had read stories of other clashes, and hatreds, and cruelties. He had just read about a gang of Negro boys up in Harlem jumping a white man and shoving the end of a broken bottle into his face.

"Let's go and ask them in that store," suggested Johnstone. "They'll know everybody around here." He wasn't thinking about any clashes between "Whites" and "Coloreds." He was just thinking about how to get a few sacks of coal cheap, and he knew who would know about things like that.

The store was dim inside with the light seeming to live only beyond the dust-laden windows. On the shelves was a sparse stock of cans, and in a show case an anemic collection of meat cuts and sausages. On the counter was a box which apparently served as the cash register and behind the box was an old woman, staring at them beadily. She had an incredibly long upper lip and large, soft brown eyes which gave her the appearance of a gentle, old horse.

"Yasuh?"

"Could you please tell me if anybody around here sells coal by the sack?" asked the Corporal. He was surprised at himself for assuming the rôle of spokesman.

"No suh. Ah doan know."

"Nobody at all, eh?"

"No suh."

An expression of interest crept across the old woman's face.

"Tell you what. Cross the railroad tracks they's a coal yard. Might try there. Just go straight across there," she pointed.

"Okay. Thanks!"

The old woman's eyes were bright and gleaming.

"Well at least she was cooperative," remarked the Corporal as he closed the door.

"They have to be," grunted the Pfc.

A thin girl of about ten dashed between them. She was chasing a smaller, skinnier boy.

"You gimme that," she yelled "or I'll cut your belly open."

The eyes of the Corporal widened. Kids are all the same. . . . "Let's get out of here," he said.

The Pfc. just laughed.

The coal office was closed and there was no coal in the yard. Then they saw the coal wagon again or another one.

"Hey!" the Pfc. waved. "Got any coal there?"

The driver drew his nag to a halt and shook his head slowly back and forth. "No suh. No suh. Plumb sold out." He bowed slightly with a trace of comic dignity. On the top of his head was a coal-streaked, floppy felt hat. Buttoned up closely around his chin was a GI overcoat with one brass button missing. Behind him were four small boys, thrilling to the joy of their ride. Their eyes popped as they listened.

"I know a man what has some though."

The effigy on the wagon brightened, continued: "Down on Sixth Street. See that traffic light way down there?"

"Yeah."

"Well just down there and turn to yo' right. Then in the middle of the block you see a drug store and right beside that is another store, and that's wheah it is. They got a coal yard in the back."

His head resumed its shaking. "It's hard to git coal. Hard to git coal."

They had walked a hundred feet in the direction of the traffic light when they heard the clip, clop of the tired old plug behind them. The driver had turned around in the street and was coming after them. He was beckoning with a lordly and faintly peremptory air.

"Come on up heah whaht folks. I'll carry yuh theah."

The soldiers shot a quick glance at each other and the Pfc. started to laugh, but he stopped for the Corporal was already handing himself up the high side of the cart. With one leg over the top he turned around.

"Come on! A ride's a ride, isn't it?"

Silently Johnstone followed. The four black boys scattered. Johnstone stood aloof staring straight out ahead without seeing anything as though by not seeing he could prevent others seeing him. The driver waited for the urchins to get settled again.

"Git outa the way! Git outa the way! Make room for the whaht folks."

The Corporal sat on the board seat beside him, but the Pfc. remained stiffly in the center of the wagon. Slowly they creaked down the populous street as the driver, his chest curved out in pride, clucked at his horse.

The Corporal found himself talking. "Were you in the Army?" he asked, totally misjudging the man's age.

"Lawd no! I was too old for tuther wah. Got two boys in this un though. Maybe they'll git me for the next one. Yeah, they'll git evah-body for the next one."

From a porch on one of the dingy houses rang a peal of laughter. The fantastic ark was putting on a show, a good, free show. Teeth flashed from the sidewalk. Johnstone's face was red and the Corporal felt foolish.

"Know how much I made with this outfit this week?" asked the old man, ignoring the laughter.

"No. How much?"

"Guess."

The old man lowered his voice.

"One hundred and eight dollars. Yas suh, one hundred and eight dollars, jest hustlin' wood and coal."

When the old man stopped they jumped off with a wave at their benefactor, and entered another musty, cluttered store. It seemed to the Corporal that they were making a mistake. This was no way to order coal. Why did they have to go rooting around in this district? Near the rear five women and a man were seated around a squat stove. The man had a broad, flattened face. When he saw the two white men his mouth opened and he sat there motionless until they left, hung in suspense, his arms dangling by his side. An old lady in a black covering was shelling peas. Her eyes were shrewd and surrounded with a maze of wrinkles.

"Have you got any coal by the sack, please?"

"No suh. Ahm sorry. Ah just plumb sorry. Ain't got a sack left. Doan know wheah you can git a sack neither." The old lady was the speaker. "Wheah could they get some coal?" she went on, prodding the others into a sudden buzz.

"Reckon you could try Dubbs. Yeah, they got coal," offered one shapeless form.

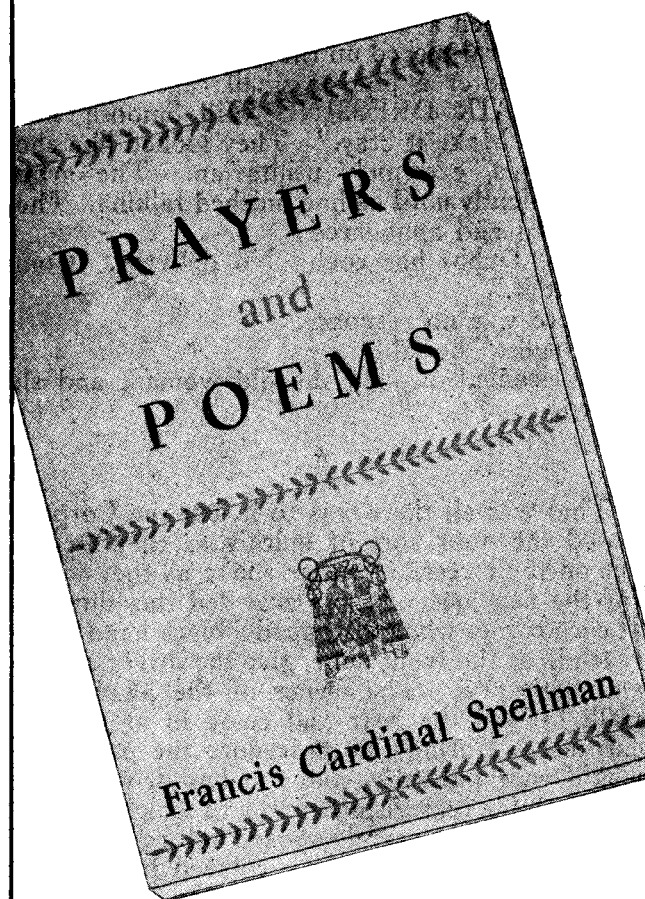
"Dubbs?"

"Yas suh, Dubbs. They got coal. Least most of the time they got coal."

B. ALTMAN & CO.

FIFTH AVENUE

NEW YORK



"PRAYERS AND POEMS"

by Francis Cardinal Spellman

just recently published, a little book with a message of hope and consolation by New York's new cardinal. Its subject is the war and the desire of all for a just peace to follow. 1.00

Altman book shop, main floor

"You don't happen to know their phone number do you?"

"You can use the phone book. Use the phone book and call 'em up."

The Pfc. was standing by the door. "I'm gettin' sick of this," he said. "Let's get out of this heah dump."

The women around the fire seemed to stiffen. The Corporal picked up the phone book, noticing on the counter a pile of small cans labelled in red. "HAIR DRESSING Will Smooth Your Hair and Make it Stay." They looked like shoe polish cans, extremely utilitarian. The group waited silently until he had finished talking. Then he turned and announced:

"Yes, Dubbs has coal. No delivery. Come and get it."

There was no response.

"Thanks," he said.

"Welcome," replied the old woman, and she smiled.

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That was all there was to it, but the Corporal closed the door sort of quickly as they stepped out on the street. Neither spoke as they waited for the next bus. It was crowded this time and at each corner when it stopped a black hand would reach in at the front door, give the driver a nickel and withdraw. The owner of the hand would walk toward the rear and come in at the side entrance. During this procedure the passengers would wait patiently, and the bus driver would peer into his rear vision mirror to make sure that the passenger was safely aboard before he started. At one downtown corner a colored boy stepped on the front steps of the bus. Quick as a flash the driver's fingers touched the control lever and the door snapped shut striking the boy on the side of the head as he jumped back.

"They'll learn," said the driver quietly.

The Pfc. nodded.

Block after block they rolled, first through a "good" district with substantial houses and wide lawns. There were brick houses and stucco, and ranch houses, and Cape Cod and Moderns. The eyes of the two soldiers searched them intently, wistfully.

Then again came the shacks, the clean ones, the painted ones, scattered flippantly about, each anchored in its own swept yard like a de-wheeled trailer. There were more children on the streets. Then again came the paintless shacks, the vertical boarded ones, with a bed and the family table visible through the open front door. Here again the streets were crowded and the crowds were black.

"Here's your corner," said the bus driver.

To their left beyond a startlingly glass-fronted bottling plant and a peanut mill was the Dubbs

Coal and Ice Company. On the loading platform a group of Negroes were laughing. Their throats caught in shrieks, their voices broke, they wiped tears from their eyes and slapped their thighs. One of them tore off his hat and slammed it to the ground in his mirth. Two foremen looked on with grudging amusement.

One of the foremen shook his head at the two soldiers.

"Sorry boys, no coal. We've got only a few sacks and its all spoken for. Look at those cars lined up to get it."

The two soldiers turned, but one of the roisterers called them.

"See that old boy over there?" He pointed at a dilapidated pick-up truck at the curb. "That old boy mought be able to he'p yo' some. He sometimes gits a few sacks of coal."

★

Half-heartedly they crossed the street and framed the familiar question.

"No suh."

"Know anybody that has some?"

"No suh. Sho' don't."

"Well those boys over there said you did."

"Well, I dunno, I might."

Johnstone's face was getting red and he glared at the driver, but the man wasn't looking at him. He kept talking out of the side of his mouth. The other side was swollen in a large, round bulge. Some sort of disease, thought the Corporal.

"How about it? We sure need some coal. We'd be glad to pay you if you could help us. Maybe you could haul a few sacks for us."

"I know where they got some I guess, but I cain't git it, cause I ain't got a license to sell it and they think I'm peddlin' it."

"You'd think coal was liquor or something."

"Yeah."

"Would they sell it to us?"

"Yeah, they'd sell it to you all."

"Well would you haul a few sacks for us if we went with you?"

"Dunno. I gotta be gettin' home soon."

"How far is it?"

"Maybe a mile."

"Jeez, we gotta get some coal. How about taking us over there."

"Okay, I'll take yuh. Come on. Git in," said the driver suddenly.

The jalopy rattled off with the three of them packed in the narrow seat. The Corporal was proud of his negotiations.

"Yeah," said the driver. "I got a brother still in the army. Got two kids. Tough to git along. Sho' is." The Corporal pulled out a packet of cigarettes and offered them around. There was a quick, flitting change in the Negro's face.

"No suh. Thanks," he said.

At the weighing office of the coal yard the man said: "No coal." The boys swore about the shacks that were so cold, they swore about the coal situation. The Corporal damned the South, and the Pfc. damned the North for sending the cold weather. They walked back to the truck certain that the Negro would give them up and leave them stranded, and Johnstone muttered: "If that damn nigger starts to give us any lip. . ." But the driver didn't hear him and only said quietly: "Come on, I know another place."

They turned right and turned left, bounced over railroad tracks, over dirt roads, they passed factories and mills and more shacks, and at last drew up in front of another grimy coal yard.

The man in the office was laconic. "How many," he said, not asking, stating.

"Three sacks apiece," said the Pfc.

"A dollar a sack. Six bucks altogether. Drive up in the yard there." The price of coal was fifty cents a sack. The soldiers hesitated, then paid without a word. "Them niggers out in the yard'll he'p you," volunteered the man sullenly. With the coal rattling pitifully in the back of the truck they drove off and a half an hour later they turned into the yard of the bleak, white house.

"I wonder how much he'll charge us?" the Corporal whispered, as the man shoveled off the coal.

"Okay. How much do we owe you?" he asked when the man had finished.

"Oh I dunno," said the man and the bulge in his cheek shifted to the other side of his face.

"I dunno," he repeated. He shuffled his feet.

"Well come on. How much do we owe you?"

"I dunno."

"Well, what the hell!" shouted Johnstone.

The man's eyes shifted rapidly from side to side. He started to say something but the wad of tobacco seemed to get in the way. Suddenly he turned around and jumped into his truck.

"It'll be all right," he said. "Take it easy."

With an explosive roar the truck burst into life and staggered out of the yard.

"Hey!" shouted the two soldiers.

But the man was gone. The coal lay black on the ground in the gathering dusk, and there was a frosty chill in the air. The sky was clear and blue. . . .

"Do you know," said the Corporal to his wife, "that guy knew we were kind of broke, and got gypped at the coal yard, and somehow or other—well he just made up his mind not to take our money."

"Do you know," said the Pfc. to his wife, "That damn, crazy nigger got so scared when I hollered at him that he jumped into his truck and beat it without even waitin' to git his money."

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The Conscious Faerie-Tale

History of the origin of
a romantic literary genre

Paul Rosenfeld

PERMIT ME a beginning in the manner of the gossip columns in the daily press: "Undine, which George Somnes and Schuyler Watts are to produce on Broadway, is Mr. Watts's adaptation of a play by the lamented Jean Giraudoux based on the famous 'miniature romance,' the faerie-tale *Undine* of the early nineteenth century romanticist Friedrich de la Motte-Fouqué. * * The contents of the current issue of the Harvard undergraduate magazine, *The Harvard Wake*, the issue in homage of E. E. Cummings, include *The Old Man Who Said 'Why,'* one of several unpublished faerie-tales by Mr. Cummings. * * Another American poet, Jean Starr Untermeyer, recently has completed the translation of *The New Melusine*, by Goethe. It is to be included in an anthology, *Strange to Tell*, by Rolfe Humphries and Marjorie Fischer. *The New Melusine* is the faerie-tale inserted by Goethe in *Wilhelm Meister's Wanderjahre*. * * Arrangements for the republication, in France, in French, of yet another faerie-tale, by yet another late and lamented French author, now are in process of completion. The tale is *The Little Prince*; the author, Antoine de Saint-Exupéry. * *"

It is that "Undine," by de la Motte-Fouqué and "The Old Man Who Said 'Why,'" by E. E. Cummings; "The Little Prince," by Saint-Exupéry and "The New Melusine," by Goethe, all are instances of the conscious faerie-tale, a literary genre with a brilliant career. Besides Goethe, authors such as Tieck, E. T. A. Hoffmann and Clemens Brentano illustrated it in Germany. Hans Christian Andersen is, of course, its great Danish author; Tolstoy its Russian; James Stephens its Irish one. Particular instances of it are famous, among amateurs of fine literature no less than among children. One has but to think of Carroll's "Alice In Wonderland," Tolstoy's "What Men Live By," Stephens's "The Crock of Gold," "The White Deer," by James Thurber and "Stuart Little," by E. B. White are current instances; the one in the worst, the other in the best casual *New Yorker* manner.

Definitely persistent in our time, the conscious faerie-tale very naturally must be an object of our interest. Not much about its origin, history, scope and principle is however to be found in books. No critic or scholar has studied it as a

whole. Pre-Hitlerite Germans, to be sure, discussed and criticized the rich little literature of conscious faerie-tales in German, under the rubric *Das Kunstmaerchen*, the faerie-tale of art. Oftentimes finely perceptive of details, their studies necessarily are partial. Hence, altogether the reading public, which frequently confuses the delightful genre with the traditional faerie-tale, the faerie-tale of folklore, cannot be blamed for making this mistake.

A brief picture of the origin, history, distinctive features and idea of the conscious faerie-tale will not thus be out of order. Besides, any picture of it necessarily must reflect something of romanticism, particularly its German variety. Some of its rarest instances were the work of German romanticists. And romanticism, its German variety in particular, we are assured, will constitute the substance of the next great "revival" among us. (Lest anyone take fright, be it straightway said that the German romanticists were not romantic Germans, they were rationalists who discovered the irrational.)

★

Two books in the last decades of the seventeenth century triumphantly had made the pattern of the conscious faerie-tale—the mold into which its new metal was to be poured—a part of European literature. This was of course the *Maerchen*, the traditional faerie-tale. By the *Maerchen* we mean not only the traditional story involving superhuman and non-human beings from popular mythology such as elves, ogres, "talking animals and vegetables and minerals of prodigious virtue," but the story whose pictures and events in well-nigh every respect are independent of the laws of physical reality and the logic of sober understanding. Unlike those of the legend and the saga, which are primitive history, the events and personages of the *Maerchen* want, for example, any connection with definite geographical regions or periods of time.

One of these influential late seventeenth century books was the "Pentameron" of Giambattista Basile, a collection of faerie-tales in the Neapolitan dialect. The other was "Mother Goose," by the French academician Perrault, but attributed by him to his little son Perrault d'Ar-

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mancourt. Both of them, Perrault's volume especially, struck and probably stimulated a taste for stories of this kind in the reading-public. The first French translation of "A Thousand Nights and a Night," the "Arabian Nights' Entertainments," appeared in 1704-08; and other collections of folk-tales were issued throughout the century, in Germany as well as in France. They culminated in that painstaking, famous early nineteenth century work of folklore, the "Children and House Maerchen" of the brothers Grimm.

What is important: even in the eighteenth century "Mother Goose" stimulated inventiveness in the form of the faerie-tale among the literary collectors and paraphrasts of the traditional tale. One of its forms was the fabrication of faerie-tales with the unbridled play of fantasy. A group of voluminous women-writers, Mesdames d'Aulnoy and Murat and Mademoiselle de la Force, filled their original tales with incidents and enchantments so prodigious that, as someone said, it appeared "that each of these ladies wrote under the impression that she must bear away the palm whose palaces were lighted by the greatest profusion of carbuncles, whose dwarves were the most diminutive and hideous, and whose chariots were drawn by the most unearthly monsters." The philosopher Fontenelle remarked that the most marvelous event in their tales was, when a person shipwrecked in the middle of the ocean had the misfortune to be drowned. Tasteless as they were, these and other eighteenth century manipulations of the mold nonetheless developed a freedom with it among men of letters. Thus they led to those manipulations, with poets' touches, which produced the new genre called *Das Kunstmaerchen*, by German scholars; better, we think, called the conscious faerie-tale.

★

It appeared in 1795, in the form of a story by Goethe simply entitled "Das Maerchen." Innocent of realism; a substance of charming pictures and events independent of the laws of physical reality, "Das Maerchen" told the mysterious tale of a Green Snake rendered incandescent by the gold she devoured; of a Subterranean Temple with four statues of Kings; a melancholy barefoot Prince, and a Lovely Lily whose touch killed the living and reanimated the dead. (In later years it became the subject of almost as many and as various interpretations as the Second Part of "Faust.") A certain over-resplendence related this faerie-tale to the productions of Mme. d'Aulnoy and her group. But unlike the preceding eighteenth century faerie-tales, "Das Maerchen" was a work of the poetical imagination. It meant something, and moved.

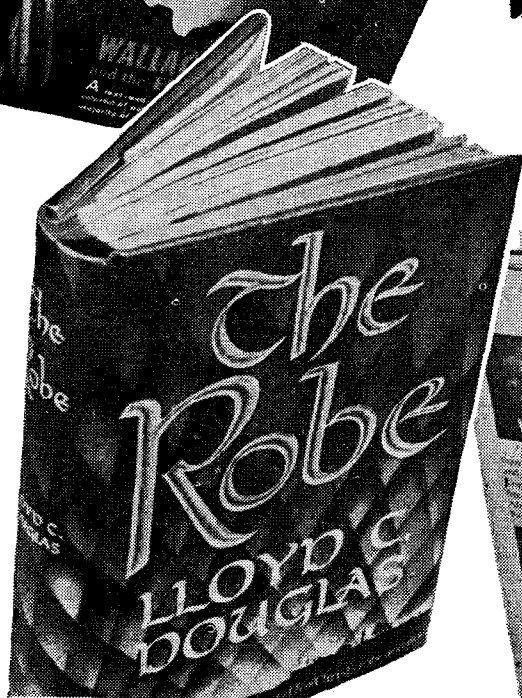
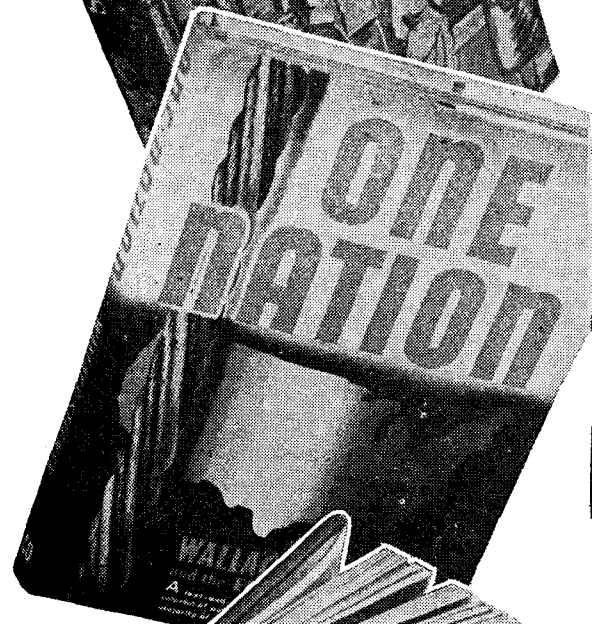
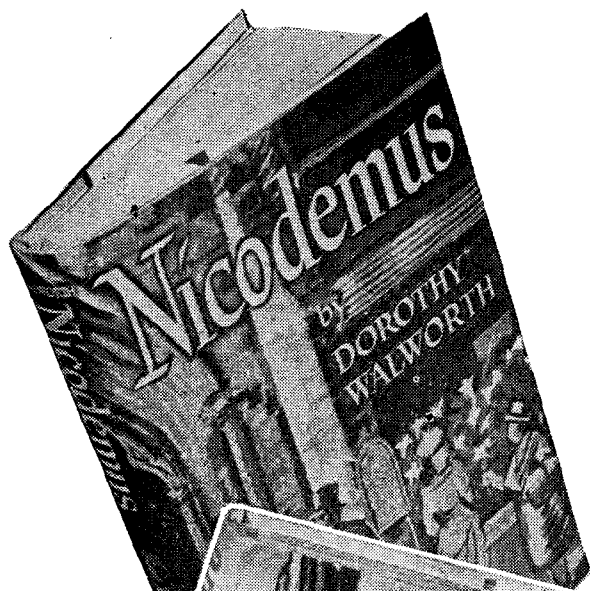
Through the lips of Herder, one of the great eighteenth century teachers, criticism had revealed

the poetic content and importance of "folk-literature," one of whose subdivisions was of course the traditional faerie-tale. Serious literature, Herder taught, could exist quite as well in the molds of "folk-poetry"—folk-songs and ballads—as in the classic molds. In opening his century's eyes he had had no more attentive a scholar than the young Goethe; and like lyrics by Goethe such as "The Wild Rose" and ballads such as "The Erl-King," "Das Maerchen" doubtless must be referred to his influence.

Making a strong impression on members of the rising romantic school, the story became a sort of model of the numerous literary faerie-tales, suffused with the freshness of vitality, which streamed from Novalis and from Tieck, from Brentano and von Arnim and the rest of the talented German group of 1800. The conscious faerie-tales of the French—by Nodier and later de Banville, finally by Saint Exupéry—like the Danish ones by Andersen and the English ones by Ruskin, Kingsley, Lewis Carroll and Oscar Wilde were to follow.

What distinguished these faerie-tales from the traditional ones on which they modeled themselves was not of course their poetic content. The traditional tales also are works of the poetic imagination. Neither was it the fact that they had individual authors. In all probability the traditional tales also had individual authors. Modern criticism knows of no circumstance such as the collective authorship of organisms like the traditional faerie-tales. It may know of the collective authorship of parodies, on the part of regiments of soldiers in wartime. But not of organic pieces of work. What it feels is this: while the motifs of the traditional Maerchen are timeless, "beneath each" of the stories in which these motifs were incorporated there was "an individual": maybe a minstrel, or a clerk, or a court-poet. It merely was in the course of their transmission by the mass of nameless persons called "the folk" that the stories became anonymous. "The folk" renders all things anonymous, including Mozart sonatas and polonaises by Chopin.

No: the considerable difference between the traditional Maerchen and the series initiated by Goethe's story of the Green Snake resides first of all in this: that the traditional story was naively, unconsciously composed, while the series beginning with "Das Maerchen" was the work of sophisticated and deliberate craftsmen. Does it not give many evidences of having been handled by its authors in keen awareness of the distinctive features of the faerie-tale, the "once upon a time" mold; its special style and other idiosyncracies? In "Das Maerchen," for example, do not weighty objects lightly float, and light itself cast no shadow?



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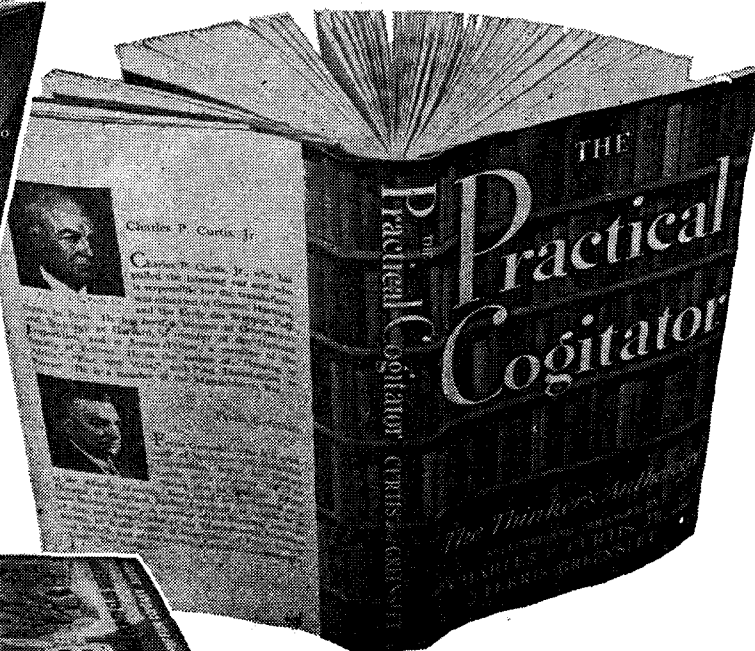
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Dreaming of reanimating folk literature in all its forms, its authors indeed had studied folk-songs and folk-tales, and collected them. And certain of their number—Brentano and Andersen, for example—even reworked some of the traditional stories. Thus it is that, in consciousness that this series of Maerchen constituted a new kind of literature, and in searching for its name, German scholars decided upon "The Faerie-Tale of Art," while the present writer humbly thinks the name ought to be the conscious faerie-tale.

★

Looking back over the new genre we now can see that another of its distinctive features is the implication, by its specimens, of meanings with a greater complexity than those which the traditional tales imply. Only compare any conscious faerie-tale with any traditional one, to perceive this truth. Take for example, the traditional story, "The Sleeping Beauty" and the conscious one "The Ugly Duckling." The first at the utmost symbolizes the stage in the growth of the young girl when life seems asleep within her—her own life and that of her father, her mother, the race—and the way in which it usually concludes. Undoubtedly this meaning is lovely. But "The Ugly Duckling": it symbolizes the frightening struggle of every being with whom its milieu is at odds not only because he is an individual and develops slowly but because he is built on a scale slightly bigger than that of its component elements: and it symbolizes more. In the figures of the old woman with the tom-cat and the hen, with whom the frozen duckling temporarily finds shelter, it slyly satirizes the self-satisfied Denmark of Andersen; by implication all self-complacent little communities. Again it symbolizes the secret of the fine human being who survives. Andersen by no means meant that the ugly duckling turned into a swan merely because he had been born a cygnet. What he meant to say, indeed what he does say, is that the gawky creature became a swan because he did something for himself: put up a struggle, eluded the Hunter's gun, survived the winter storms. Finally the story says that through the poets—the swans in the park—life sees itself in beauty.

Or, if you will, take Andersen's "The Nightingale." Smilingly celebrating the true beauty which, like the enchanting song of the little grey bird, is produced only from the full heart and in freedom, simultaneously it draws the poet's picture of the ultimate destructiveness of the gadgets so inordinately valued by the modern world. . . . Or that arch faerie-tale, not quite for children, which Goethe composed twenty years after "Das Maerchen," "The New Melusine": the tale, which Mrs. Untermeyer has translated, of the young wanderer who loves women and gaming and of the mysterious young woman who gives

him a bag of gold and a chest and meets him at the inns where he makes halt. (Peering through a chink into the lighted chest in his coach one night, he sees her sitting tinily within it: she really is a gnome. His love fails, and at a gathering while she sings he insults her. When remorse overcomes him, she consents to pardon him on condition he permit himself to be made a gnome like herself. But he cannot tolerate the diminution, and escapes, to become—a barber.) Playfully; but as in the entire "Wanderjahre" in which it is incorporated, Goethe in this story represented nothing less than the action of the inward forces which create society by obliging the individual to renounce the life of passion and all extra-societal individualism, and sacrifice himself to a calling.

★

Yet another of the delectable genre's distinguishing features is the prevalence of particularly romantic thoughts among the meanings fancifully symbolized by it. The movement had rediscovered the interior reality: the hidden and the semi-conscious and the subconscious life; and dreamt of harmonizing and developing it. To make life real, thought the romantics, man had to bring about a fusion of his contrarily-striving sensuous and intellectual natures. Sensuousness had to be spiritualized, and intellect to become a part of earth. In the poet, for example, the material impulse, which expresses itself in the absorption of impressions and experiences, had to be penetrated by the form-impulse, while the form-impulse, which expresses itself in the creation of schemes and designs, had to be brought into contact with the material one. This thought is the burden for example of "Das Maerchen." The luminous Green Snake and the Lovely Lily symbolize both the sensuous nature and material impulse of man. The barefoot melancholy Prince symbolizes the disembodied intellect; and in the self-sacrificial action of the Snake, Goethe sought to represent the manner in which the desired union of the contrary-striving impulses might be realized. . . . Almost a hundred and fifty years later, Antoine de Saint-Exupéry similarly represented the interior and hidden and forgotten reality in his faerie-tale "The Little Prince"; for the story is not only the brilliant airman's doubtless courageous—typically courageous—confession of the great degree to which his own inner being was like the yearning and dreaming child who is the story's hero. It was his witty indication to a society dessicated like the Sahara into which his plane crashes at the story's beginning, that only its forgotten core of childhood, at once wonder, innocence and acceptance of death, can lead it to its well of water.

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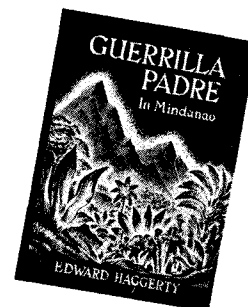
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ished by the rank romantics also glimmer in the infinitely suggestive thing. One of these was that a single spirit is at work in nature and in man; though differently: that what is sleepingly, unconsciously active in nature, in man produces the culture of knowledge. The evolution of nature thus repeats itself on a higher level in the evolution of human knowledge. This concept reflects itself in "Hyacinth and Rosebud," the graceful little Maerchen inserted by the subtle Novalis in his fragment "The Disciples at Saïs." Hyacinth loves the simple Rosebud but leaves her, his paternal garden and his fatherland in search of knowledge of the mysteries of nature. After wandering he reaches a temple precinct; and inside the temple, the opening doors of the shrine at the moment of initiation deliver Rosebud, glorified, to his arms. . . . For others of the romanticists, however, the spirit of nature, though divine, was a sunken soul, and desire for knowledge of her secrets a mistake. In "The Rune Mountain," by Tieck, a youth astray in the hills comes on what he takes to be a subterranean hall and in it sees a woman of superhuman stature and unearthly beauty regarding a tablet inscribed with incomprehensible signs. She is this spirit; and drawn back to her, and quitting his wife and children, he afterwards returns home, haggard, spent, dragging a load of what he claims to be jewels but really are rocks! (Across the Atlantic, a gentler variant of the idea reappeared in the pale colors of the Hudson River: "Rip van Winkle," by Washington Irving.) But in the "miniature romance" on which poor Jean Giraudoux based his "Ondine," the "Undine" of de la Motte-Fouqué, this spirit in the form of a water-sprite is represented as being in love with the human being and yearning to receive a soul. Endued with one through love, and deceived by man, she still embraces him in death.

★

"Here is my secret, a very simple secret," says the fox to the Little Prince in Saint-Exupéry. "It is only with the heart that one can see rightly: what is essential is invisible to the eye." All the inventors of the conscious faerie-tale would have agreed with this fox: that the deeply-lying forces reveal themselves only in the form of subjective experiences. Reason they felt did not determine knowledge of these forces; they could not be proved, explained, related. Here indubitably we have one of the sources of the conscious faerie-tale. Seeking a means to express their own super-sensual-spiritual experiences, and aware that the traditional faerie-tale symbolized knowledge of the profundities as it comes to the heart in dreams, these writers adopted its method, its composition of pictures and events independent of the logic of sober understanding. . . . Reasoning alone, however, cannot be thought solely to have

been responsible for their adoption of the method. These men were "romantics": by which we mean representatives all of the human temperament characterized by a lack of respect for reality, a tendency to turn away from it or to adapt to it through inventions which change it. Disaffected by realism in art, by the empirical and sensuous and concrete, naturally they preferred fiction which, as Goethe said of his own "Maerchen," "reminds one of nothing and of everything." "A Midsummer-Night's Dream," that historical example of a *Kunstmaerchen* raised to the degree of great art by their beloved Shakespeare, fortified their impulsion to evolve the faerie-tale. Their extraordinary successfulness with the mold on the other hand must be ascribed to the singular union within themselves of a vein of humor and a feeling for the popular, with the veins of pathos and of fantasy and the feeling for the simplicity of folk-art, for the earthfast, and for fresh poetic diction, characteristic of writers of their temperament. This union would appear to be the medium's prerequisite. It might even be thought that this union has but to effect itself, and conscious faerie-ales refreshingly appear!

The Screen

A Shamrock Grows in Scotland

NOT SINCE Freddie Bartholomew won our ohs and ahs as young David Copperfield has there been such an appealing young 'un as eight-year-old Robbie in "The Green Years." Large-eyed, handsome Dean Stockwell is a natural in the rôle which he plays to perfection. Of course he is greatly helped by the fine production of Leon Gordon, the direction of Victor Saville and some extraordinary photography which succeeds throughout the early part of the film in heightening the adult world to make it even more awesome and forbidding to a small boy in strange surroundings. Furthermore the rôle itself is calculated to win our sympathies, for A. J. Cronin's story has that Dickensian quality of piling blow after blow on our hero who can hardly hold back his tears of loneliness before all these hostile faces and indifferent people. Later, hands of friendship are extended to the little fellow, and these sequences are particularly moving; for the picture has a sweet sorrow; it is comforting to watch another person's misery in this world of woe—and wide.

I wouldn't accuse Mr. Cronin of being a copy-cat when movies themselves are so frequently guilty on that score, but the picture made from his book does remind one of touches from his own past films as well as the soft sentiment of "Goodbye, Mr. Chips," the youthful struggle and spirit of survival over hard knocks in "A Tree Grows in Brooklyn," the groping for knowledge through adverse circumstances in "The Corn Is Green." "The Green Years" tells the story of an Irish-Catholic orphan who is brought up in the early 1900's by his mother's strict

"Mr. Ernst's book deserves to be widely read"

—HARRY LORIN BINSSE
Managing Editor, *Commonweal*

DICTATORSHIP may come to a nation in any of several ways. A people may be deprived of their rights by violence. Or they may vote them away. Or they may *sit idly by while a few persons monopolize the means of communication*. A handful of men can quietly come to dominate practically all the motion pictures of a nation. A quartet of companies can become the owners of the best radio stations. A score of men can be the proprietors of the majority of Sunday newspapers. This—says Morris Ernst—is exactly what has happened in the United States. His book, which may become one of the most controversial of the season, is filled with facts supporting his contention. He proves beyond doubt the trend toward monopoly in the fields of mass communication.

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PAUL BIXLER says in *The Chicago Sun*, "Before you have turned many pages in Ernst's book you ask why his facts haven't been made available before. Some of the conditions he describes are of years' standing. Why didn't someone tell us these things?"

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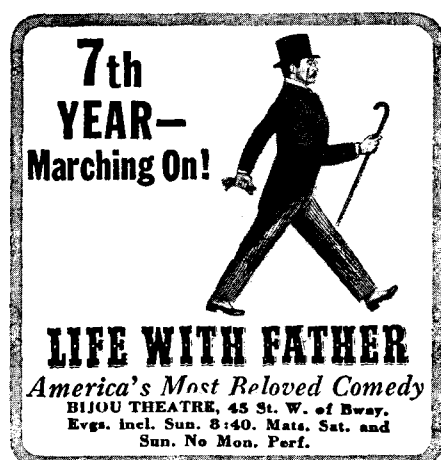
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Scotch-Presbyterian family. Although the telling is not subtle, and has no complicated "Brideshead Revisited" Catholic theme, the film acquires appeal through its simple and moving build-up that conveys the religious experiences of this boy.

In the first place, Robert Shannon has no easy time keeping his faith in this Protestant house; perhaps the very meanness of the penurious Leckies prompts him to stay in the Catholic Church; in any case his courageous fight for his beliefs is inspiring. "A boy's go to be what he's born to be," he explains to his greatgrandfather who disapproves of Robbie's choice, but applauds the boy's determination to follow his conscience. So when "Papa" Leckie refuses the fifteen shilling for a First Communion suit, "Grampa" handles the matter according to his own conscience in one of the most humorous of the film's many amusing episodes. Your heart will melt during the beautifully portrayed sequence when Robbie, face all aglow and eyes shining brightly, receives Our Lord for the first time, while in the rear of the church is his gruff great-grandfather, the only one of the family to take an interest. That Robbie, when a young man, renounces his God, after a series of sorrowful and adverse incidents including the deaths of a close friend and worn-out "Mama" Leckie, proves a factor later in sending him more ardently than ever back to Mother Church, strengthened by honest doubt, victorious after battling despair.

Author Cronin and the scriptwriters (Robert Ardrey and Soyna Levien) realized that this story, top-heavy with life-is-a-vale-of-tears episodes and an abundance of characters in colorless gray and muddy brown, needed at least one very bright, cheerful characterization. Great-grandpa Gow is it, and Charles Coburn puts his all into the rôle. Wearing a W. C. Fields nose, which would be red if this film were in technicolor, Coburn plays the robust, liquor-loving old man with great gusto. As is so often the case, a warm friendship and understanding develop between this ancient lovable codger and the child. It is "Grampa" who burns that horrible green suit that "Grandmother" Leckie made for the lad out of her petticoat. It is "Grampa" who stands by the young Roman when he embraces a faith that does not conform to this stern Scotch community, and who stands by him with the school teacher (played with distinction by Richard Haydn) when Robbie tries for a scholarship.

If Coburn's performance is hammed up a bit and seems at times (as in the Flower Show scene when he wears kilts) a caricature of an elderly man, it must be remembered that his exaggerated characterization is necessary to the story. For Robbie as a boy, and as a young man (played by Tom Drake, who actually could be the outgrowth of the delightful Dean Stockwell characterization) is surrounded by his mother's relatives who have as much warmth as a dish of cold Scotch oatmeal. Director Saville has done a first-rate job in bringing the figures of Cronin's book to life: Hume Cronyn as the vain, stingy "Papa" Leckie, Selena Royle as his tired wife who has the desire but hardly the strength to help Robbie, Gladys Cooper as the matriarch who dominates the house, Jessica Tandy as Robbie's aunt, Norman Lloyd as Robbie's uncle

(mean and greedy like "Papa") and Robert North as the other uncle (kind but ineffectual). In fact, hardly anyone in the Leckie house, excepting "Grampa" Gow, has much chance at living a full rich life; the Leckies even "think poor." Robert Shannon does have a few outside friends including Gavin and Alison who becomes a bonny lassie (Beverly Tyler) with a lovely singing voice and a love for Robbie that holds promise at the film's end.

So it is a wonder that Robert Shannon grew up to be the fine lad we see as the picture closes. Heaven knows he'd been through much, too much for any orphan subjected to a penny-pinching family. But this movie about his salad days, glowing with the warmth of a strong faith, is a tribute to a boy's will. As entertainment, "The Green Years" is tops—perhaps not as motion picture in the best cinematic tradition, but as a fascinating study in characterization and the growth of dignity. You will laugh and may even drop a tear as Robbie goes through his green years and comes of age; for "a man's a man for a' that."

PHILIP T. HARTUNG.

Among Spring Books

IN THE FIELD of fiction there is more than usual variety. The range is all from early historical to current times. There are several good novels but no single one is outstanding.

David the King, Gladys Schmitt (Dial, \$3.00), is a rather remarkable evocation in extremely modern language of the life and times of King David.

Power and the Glory, Graham Greene (Viking, \$2.50), the most distinguished on the list, is a reissue of a novel that has long been unavailable, "The Labyrinthine Ways," the last days of a hunted priest in Mexico.

Miss Bunting, Angela Thirkell (Knopf, \$2.50), provides that English author's usual blend of charm and special sort of humor which are so relished by her many fans.

The Street, Ann Petry (Houghton, \$2.50), is an impressive narrative of life in turbulent Harlem; it is perhaps the most important of the newest novels.

Twelve Stories, Steen Steensen Blicher (Princeton, \$3.00), brings to American readers a fascinating group of Danish folk tales, together with a remarkable sketch of the author's life by Sigrid Undset.

The Unreasoning Heart, Constance Beresford-Howe (Dodd, \$2.50), is this year's winner of the intercollegiate novel contest. It is an appealing love story which grows in emotional intensity to the point of glossing over the young author's stylistic banalities.

Wildwood, Josephine W. Johnson (Harper, \$2.00), is a pale, sensitive, delicate story of a frustrated childhood and youth.

About People

The Autobiography of William Allen White (Macmillan, \$3.75), has vast, dreary patches, but its highlights make it well worth having. To an outsider it is most barren when dealing with Kansas politics; for nearly everyone it is most appealing in the chapters devoted to Mr. White's boyhood, university life and first days on a country paper. *Mr. Lincoln's Camera Man*: Mathew B. Brady, Roy

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Meredith (Scribners, \$7.50), is probably the most handsome gift book of the season. It is not surprising that the halftones are superb.

The Ciano Diaries, 1939-1943, edited by Hugh L. Gibson (Doubleday, \$4.00), comprise a volume which historically is of unparalleled importance.

My Head and My Heart, Helen Duprey Bullock (Putnam, \$3.00), deals principally with the correspondence between Thomas Jefferson and Maria Cosway, who in later life often intervened on behalf of her fellow Catholics in this country. It is a volume of considerable charm. *Grooves of Change*, Viscount Samuel (Bobbs, \$3.75), is the autobiography of one of the most distinguished Englishmen of recent years. He is a writer, a philosopher, a remarkably penetrating observer.

Yankee Storekeeper, R. E. Gould (Whittlesey, \$2.50), will make a hit with anyone at all familiar with the charm of Maine.

Burma Surgeon Returns, Gordon S. Seagrave (Norton, \$3.00), continues the popular life story of a medical missionary in Burma who was caught up in the war.

Siegfried's Journey, Siegfried Sassoon (Viking, \$3.00), continues the autobiography of this country gentleman and man of letters. It is not up to his previous volume but still good reading.

America Is in the Heart, Carlos Bulosan (Harcourt, \$3.50), is a rather appealing Filipino life story.

No Time for Tears, Laura Wood Hughes (Houghton, \$3.00), tells of the interesting career of a nurse with no particular sense of language on the author's part. Her career itself and the places on which it touches carry the story along.

Other Books

Justice and the Social Order, Emil Brunner (Harper, \$3.00), a historical analysis of the varying concepts of justice in relation to society.

The First Freedom, Morris L. Ernst (Macmillan, \$3.00), deals with the question of monopoly in the fields of the press, the radio and the movies.

The Wildcatters, Samuel W. Tait (Princeton, \$3.00), is an account of prospecting for oil principally in the Oklahoma Territory days.

Courts and Cabinets, G. P. Gooch (Knopf, \$3.75), consists of a selection of excerpts from history's best diarists arranged with considerable comment and explanation by the editor.

My One Contribution to Chess, F. V. Morley (Heubsch, \$2.00), of which a chapter appeared in these columns last fall, is one of the season's most unclassifiable little books and one of its most charming.

Tomorrow's Trade, Stuart Chase (Twentieth Century Fund, \$1.00), continues its author's series of popularized economics and is perhaps the clearest and most temperate of them all. It deals with world trade rather than domestic.

The Third Day, Arnold Lunn (Newman, \$2.75), is a brilliant work of apologetics concentrating on the Resurrection.

The Beleaguered City, Alfred Hugh Bill (Knopf, \$3.00),

constitutes a biography of the City of Richmond, Va., during the Civil War.

Lay My Burden Down, edited by B. A. Botkin (Chicago, \$3.50), collects a great quantity of lore—principally traditional—concerning the Negro under slavery.

What It Takes to Rule Japan, Major Harold J. Noble, USMC (U.S. Camera, \$1.50), is widely considered the best book on this subject yet to appear; it is brief and includes many valuable illustrations.

France: A Short History, Albert G  rard (Norton, \$3.00), is precisely what its title implies and possesses the further advantage of great readability.

Woman as Force in History, Mary R. Beard (Macmillan, \$3.50), forces us to reappraise our whole concept of women's rights as the issue was presented late in the nineteenth and early in the twentieth centuries; Mrs. Beard insists that the concept of women as having substantially no rights is a relatively modern phenomenon. *The Great Divorce*, C. W. Lewis (Macmillan, \$1.50), gives us another fantasy in Mr. Lewis's happier style—that of "The Screwtape Letters" rather than that of his BBC broadcasts.

God and the Atom, Ronald Knox (Sheed and Ward, \$2.00), although not fully thought out, contains many valuable ideas and suggestions concerning this most recent of our harnessings of nature.

The Divine Pity, Gerald Vann (Sheed and Ward, \$2.50), is a theological treatise, dealing directly with asceticism and mysticism, calculated to be helpful to the Christian of the twentieth century.

The Great Retreat, Nicholas S. Timasheff (Dutton, \$5.00), is a thoroughly documented account of Russia's departure from orthodox marxism; it is a little overburdened with detail and hence it is hard to read, but it constitutes a mine of information on the subject.

Eleven Lady Lyrics, Fray Angelico Chavez (St. Anthony, \$1.25), is the latest volume of verse by this young Franciscan poet of the Southwest.

The Grist Mill, Haniel Long (Rydal, Santa F  , N. M., \$1.50), a beautifully produced little book containing many of the fine lyrics of this distinguished poet.

Late Lark Singing, T. A. Daly (Harcourt, \$2.00), collected verse of the author of "Macaroni Ballads."

The State in Catholic Thought, Heinrich A. Rommen (Herder, \$6.00), an exhaustive treatise on this subject, ably compiled.

Autographs: A Key to Collecting, Mary Benjamin (Bowker, \$6.00). This special guide book is so full of interesting anecdotes, especially in connection with Americana, that it would interest almost any reader.

Man on a Rock, Richard O. Hertz (North Carolina, \$3.00), pleads for some integration in our society.

Success on the Small Farm, Haydn S. Pearson (Whittlesey, \$2.50), is a very practical manual for earning your living on small acreage—principally by means of specialized cash crops.

Books for Young People

Here are a few of the new juveniles published this spring—admittedly only a sampling.

The Return of Father Martindale

It is a strange case, that of Father Martindale. For thirty years he had been one of the formative elements in England's spiritual life; but, as one does with the living, we took him for granted. The books came pouring out, we read them and were vitalized by them, and were glad he was there and that was all. With such men as he, it is only when the flow stops suddenly, that we realize how great a thing it had been. And this usually means that the man has died.

But with Father Martindale it did not happen so. The flow of his writing stopped, but not because he was dead. He had gone in 1940 to give some retreats in Denmark. He arrived there just as the Germans did. There, then, he was caught and had to stay for five years, cut off from all contact. What it meant to him, we can only guess: for one thing, his room was within a hundred yards of the execution park and for five years he heard every volley of rifle fire. What it meant to us was a vivid realization of what he had meant to us.

Now he is in England again: and the British Radio has asked him to give six readings in Holy Week. Back from the dead, he was chosen to talk on Love—Love Creative, Redemptive, Love Sacrificing, All-Embracing, Love to the End, Love Beyond the End. The manuscript has reached us and we shall have the book (CREATIVE LOVE \$1.00) out on April 10th.

I saw Father Martindale immediately on his return: he had looked ill, and been ill, when he left England: he returned looking more like a corpse than any man walking about on his two feet has ever looked. But these Readings are fresher and more alive than anything he has written in years, as though, where other men lapse into second childhood, he had leapt into second youth. From the moment he tells of the man whose claim to have committed every sin he punctured with the question, "What about suicide?" we are in contact with the young Martindale: that is with the man who in our generation has written of Christ Our Lord most lifegivingly.



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Vicki, A Guide Dog. Written and illustrated by Margaret S. Johnson and Helen Lossing Johnson. Harcourt. \$2.00. This is the latest in a series of excellent books for younger children on various breeds of dog.

Dogs. Gene Byrnes. Grosset. \$1.00. Most of the common breeds described and pictured in photographs, with comics alternating.

The Tiger and the Rabbit and Other Tales. Pura Belpre. Illustrated by Kay Peterson Parker. Houghton. \$1.75. Puerto Rican tales, mostly traditional.

Nappy. Inez Hogan. Dutton. \$1.00. A favorite author tells the story of how a little boy chooses a pet.

The Runaway Shuttle Train. Muriel Fuller. Illustrated by Dorathea Dana. McKay. \$2.00. A pleasantly imaginative explanation of why there are only three shuttle trains on the four tracks leading from Grand Central to Times Square.

Harriett. Charles McKinley, Jr. Illustrated by William Pene du Bois. Viking. \$2.00. Delightfully told story of the retired life of a horse in the country.

Big Music, or Twenty Merry Tales to Tell. Chosen by Mary Noel Bleecker. Illustrated by Louis S. Glanzman. Viking. \$2.50. A group of classical stories to be read aloud.

This spring has seen the issuance of an unusual number of guides to juvenile books which can prove most helpful to parents, and sometimes to librarians. Anne Thaxter Eaton gives us another of her voluminous bibliographies, chiefly useful for their completeness (*Treasure for the Taking*, Viking, \$2.50). An excellent short essay is obtainable from the New York Public Library, "Books in Search of Children," by Louise Seaman Bechtel. This little lecture might well be read by anyone interested in the field. "New Worlds to Live," by Mary Kiely (*Pro Parvulis*, \$1.00), brings that author's previous book list up to date. It is described as "a survey of material of Catholic interest available for our youth and which meets good, literary standards." Sister Clarencia of Incarnate Word College, San Antonio, Texas, in collaboration with her pupils, has prepared a useful short list which may be obtained directly from her.

Books of the Week

Light from the Ancient Past. Jack Finegan. Princeton. \$5.00.

"LIGHT FROM the Ancient Past" is a long (459 pages long plus index) and intensely concentrated work, but it is not forbidding and is remarkably what the author and the publisher say it is. It is "a connected account of the archeological background of the Hebrew-Christian religion," nearer a survey of oriental archeological science and art than a study of Hebrew-Christian history and of the Holy Bible. For so large a subject, it is necessarily a brief account, in the manner almost of a guidebook to the Ancient Near East and Mediterranean, and principally and most interestingly, to finds and studies made in those areas between the world wars.

Archeology has great fascination, and well written, well illustrated books about archeology have a special

charm. They are in a way unexciting, in a way even dull, a normally impatient reader might say, but at the same time they can be envelopingly interesting. Mr. Finegan's is a good example, an excellent presentation, without extrinsic jazzing up but proving the inherent interest of the subject treated "straight" and seriously.

A listing of the voluminous contents shows that each subject has to be treated in either compressed or superficial fashion. Superficiality is avoided by economy of style and by keeping close to the narration and summarization of the "consensus of learned opinion." The few arguments of his own which Mr. Finegan presents on interpretation of evidence are brief and clear and presumably would have to be backed up by lengthier learned monographs for the trade. The nine parts of the book cover ancient Mesopotamia, Egypt and Palestine, the Empires of Western Asia, the Holy Land at the time of Jesus, the travels of Saint Paul, a survey of Bible manuscripts, early Christian sarcophagi, and the story of ancient church buildings.

The story develops interest as an account of exploration, as a travel book, and as a beautifully illustrated description of archeology. But its principal importance and deeper interest come from the relation all this has to living history and religion and the Holy Bible. "A knowledge of these facts," the author says in preface, "is now indispensable to all serious study of the history of religion, and the proper utilization of the abundant new archeological materials may even be said to constitute the next urgent task of that study." Here he gathers together and begins work upon the material which must be further processed.

Catholics and other dogmatic Christians and Jews would be nervous about accepting him as a thoroughly satisfying interpreter and orientator of the material at hand. Mr. Finegan appears inclined to reverse the attitude toward evidence which is the rule of the Church, too quickly crediting new fragmentary archeological indications; tending to explain away some historical and particularly miraculous events in the Scripture as ordinary natural or common occurrences, and to take some Bible narratives as purified and elevated transcriptions of anciently current "myths" when that is not the traditional judgment. The Catholic Encyclopedia records a decision of the Biblical Commission "on the historical character of certain narratives": "It is not lawful to question the historical character of books hitherto regarded as historical, unless in a case where the sense of the Church is not opposed and where, subject to her judgment, it is proved by solid arguments that the sacred writer did not intend to write history." The principles of approach of Catholic Bible scholarship are not "fundamentalist," nor frozen, and rulings of the Commission are not propounded as infallible, but the burden of proof is put upon discoverers and innovators.

The following summary sentences of Mr. Finegan's have a different tenor from Leo XIII's "Providentissimus Deus": "In Egypt it has also been possible to trace 'the dawn of conscience' which meant so much to the Hebrew prophets and to all mankind. Ideas of the overshadowing care of God, and of ethical demands on earthly life root back here. . . ."

The author might appear—in another kind of book—to be "historicizing" Sacred History until the Sacred disappeared. (That the Egyptians gave their Jewish captives "conscience" is a radical idea.) But in this particular "Light from the Ancient Past" he has not had to deal directly with much of that problem, and he has succeeded

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in making the Bible and our ancestors from Abraham to the middle fifth century newly alive and relevant, and he, with the Princeton University Press, have provided the too little Bible-reading public with a fine and handsome collection of integrated evidence which leads directly to what remains The Book.

PHILIP BURNHAM.

Memoirs of Hecate County. Edmund Wilson. Doubleday. \$2.50.

THE TENDENCY in man to pounce upon the mote in his brother's eye without even suspecting the beam in his own becomes, in the case of Mr. Edmund Wilson, a pathological joke, if we are to judge by his most recent book. Long since established as a member of the intellectual elite of our time in America, held in special esteem for his knowledge of literature, his acumen as a critic, and his "good taste," he unravels, in his own outpourings, "Memoirs of Hecate County," a string of satiric stories which, in their aimlessly offensive vulgarity (aimless, unless the aim was in fact to offend), defy description.

Shuttling back and forth between New York City and a nearby country community, the "I" in Mr. Wilson's book, who provides a pivot, is a high-brow art-critic of the nineteen-twenties, intended to represent the professional of modest means in search of emotional security. This "I," frankly unconcerned with mankind in general, only interested in other people to the extent that they impinge upon himself, wholly absorbed by the demands of his own nature, might have been impaled by Mr. Wilson as the embodiment of American materialism. But Mr. Wilson does not impale him. On the contrary, he makes an effort to dignify him. He bestows upon this creature of his imagination, whose discomforts, disappointments, and desires he describes with such meticulous care, a kind of charitable concern which robs the book of its entire justification.

Of the first three stories, previously published in magazines, there is one called "Ellen Terhune" which is technically superior to the others and makes good use of the power of suggestion, telling of a woman's encroaching madness through the visits of the art-critic to her fusty old house where her ghost as a child and again as a young married woman are blended with actuality in an eerie pattern.

But it is with the story called "The Princess with the Golden Hair"—the longest in the collection—that the author takes up his main theme. Here it is that he seems to enter completely the skin of his protagonist, the art-critic, and pursues this half-hearted Casanova in adulterous dabbling with a suburban femme fatale from the secure middle class and a dance hall girl from the down-trodden circles of Brooklyn's poor, revealing the intimacies of these experiences with unpardonable pleasure.

In the most obviously satiric story in the book, "The Milhollands and Their Damned Soul," where Mr. Wilson fleeces that much fleeced business of book-publishing in New York, someone remarks: "The most immoral and disgraceful and dangerous thing that anybody can do in the arts is knowingly to feed back to the public its own ignorance and cheap tastes." Mr. Wilson himself has gone further than this: he has knowingly offered the public a book which, because of its pretensions, is far cheaper than their cheapest tastes.

VIRGILIA PETERSON.

Grooves of Change. A Book of Memoirs by Viscount Samuel. Bobbs. \$3.75.

THESE ARE memoirs in the grand manner. They are something no American can match. No matter how full his life nor how varied, to produce them their author must be fully part of centuries of the flow of evolutionary life of a people, of the full tide of history bearing the continuity of generations. We haven't that in our American lives. To the average American of today, a man who has been American and nothing else for three centuries and more (and such Americans do still exist) is something exotic, something foreign. Each English generation carries numbers of men of other peoples and races, but they merge in time completely into homogeneity. Perhaps, among the great formative influences which combine to produce that result, English schools and universities take high-ranking place. A newcomer subjected to Oxford's maturing and mellowing climate is not educated in any such sense as we use the word to denote schooling, textbooks and lectures. A basic portion of what such a man is comes from the sort of leisurely, timeless reading which is so greatly part of Oxford; a scattered almost pointless browsing among an infinity of unrelated books in which it is not important to remember who wrote what, not what he said, but which does remain a permanent part of the reader, as the food on which he has grown to full size remains part of him.

Herbert Samuel's abilities, shaped in that way, brought him rapidly into the heart of high politics. His shrewdness and balance led him into the more restricted field of high statesmanship. His perception of men, as human beings rather than great actors on the world's stage, gave

him an ability to appraise their acts in retrospect, if not to forestall them, and he records the intimacies of public life in the artistic cameos which fill the pages of his memoirs like the carved jewels of a connoisseur.

Viscount Samuel is an historian. He is a philosopher; a keen and tolerant observer, as well as an extremely active participant in the tremendous social changes which are rebuilding the whole world. Eminent English reviewers are calling this a great book. There is no doubt that it is. It will be interesting to see how far our own American readers will agree with that classification,

WILLIAM FRANKLIN SANDS.

The Peoples of the Soviet Union. Corliss Lamont. Harcourt. \$3.00.

MR. LAMONT is a total sympathizer with everything Soviet, and hence whatever he writes needs many grains of salt. Yet in his book he does graphically indicate what we so often overlook, the vast diversity of peoples within the USSR. His work is illustrated.

CONTRIBUTORS

Thomas MERTON is a distinguished poet now a member of a contemplative order.

S/Sgt. Lewis M. DICKSON is stationed at Fort Benning, Ga.

Paul ROSENFELD contributes a study for a book on "authors' authors" which he now has in preparation.

Virgilia PETERSON contributes regularly to the New York Herald Tribune's Books.

William Franklin SANDS is at present living in Washington, D. C.

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Next Week

MAN AND HIS AMUSEMENTS, by Jean C. de Menasce, is a highly poetical and provocative essay from overseas by one of the most eloquent of all Commonweal authors. It moves with pace and penetration, touching on the phenomenon of idle pleasure in a world of travail, the personal justification of the artist and the Christian view of amusements generally. No mere topical description does it justice.

REUTHER AND THE AUTO WORKERS, by John C. Cort, analyzes the supplanting of R. J. Thomas by Walter Reuther as President of the United Auto Workers (CIO). Mr. Cort deals with the subsequent comeback of the Thomas forces at Atlantic City and forecasts what that new union leadership will mean for American industrial relations.

MEXICO'S NEXT PRESIDENT, by Hensley C. Woodbridge, has to do with the official government candidate to succeed President Camacho: former Minister of the Interior Miguel Alemán. It deals with the man on whom the mantle of Calles, Obregon, Portes Gil, Rubio Ortiz, Rodríguez, Cárdenas and Camacho is destined to fall. Mr. Woodbridge provides much information as to Alemán's personal qualities and his platform. The election is less than three months off.

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